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## No- and Low-Cost Energy-Saving Tips for Multifamily Housing Common Areas

Utility costs are typically the largest controllable operating expense in multifamily housing communities. Strategic energy management practices can greatly reduce these costs, increasing net operating income. ENERGY STAR partners have found the following no- and low-cost measures to be effective in reducing energy consumption and operating expenses.



**Replace all incandescent bulbs, flood lights, and decorative spot lights with ENERGY STAR qualified compact fluorescents.** Replacing one 60 watt incandescent bulb with a 13-watt CFL will save \$56 in energy costs over the CFL's lifetime (at \$0.12/kWh). In addition, CFLs reduce future costs of purchasing new lamps – and the labor costs associated with changing light bulbs – because they last 10 times longer.

**Install programmable thermostats in common areas.** Programmable thermostats allow you to automatically adjust temperature settings during times of little or no use. Setting back temperatures by 10-15°F for 8 hours per night will reduce heating and cooling costs – the primary component of your energy bill – by 10%. Programmable thermostats can cut costs in management offices, fitness centers, model units, clubhouses, and other amenity areas.

**Lower swimming pool and hot tub temperature settings.** The American Red Cross recommends 78°F as the optimal swimming pool temperature. This adjustment can mean significant savings for pools typically set to 80°F and higher. Try turning the heater off altogether during warm summer months. Similarly, try setting hot tubs to 96°F during hotter months and no higher than 102°F during cooler months. In addition to saving money, it is also safer for residents' health.

**Install lighting controls including photosensors, vacancy sensors, and timers.** Low-cost lighting controls ensure lights will not be left on in unoccupied or naturally lit areas. Photosensors can be used in most exterior lighting applications, as well as naturally-lit indoor areas such as lobbies. Vacancy sensors work well in fitness centers, restrooms, mechanical rooms, electrical and telecom rooms, conference or business centers, and trash collection rooms. Consider timers in model units.



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**Better manage vacant units.** Vacant unit energy costs can be significant without sound energy management. Effective measures for vacant units include turning off breakers when feasible, turning heating and cooling off or to a minimal temperature setting, adjusting refrigerators and freezers to their warmest settings, and turning off water heaters. Review vacant unit bills to identify unnecessary energy use. Frequently walk through vacant units to ensure lights and thermostats are off and windows and blinds are closed. Educate vendors and contractors who work in vacant units on the steps being taken to save energy.

**Conduct regular preventative maintenance on heating and cooling equipment.** Check and replace filters regularly. Clean and treat evaporator and condenser coils, and clean dampers, air ducts, blower units, housing units and motors. Inspect fans, bearings, and belts. These activities will ensure your equipment runs efficiently and extend its useful life.

**Take steps to minimize heating and cooling load.** Install weather stripping on doors and windows to eliminate drafts and air leakage. Utilize existing ceiling fans (or install ENERGY STAR qualified ceiling fans) to reduce the need for air conditioning. Use window shades, tinting, films, or blinds to reduce heat gain in the summer (and heat loss in the winter). When weather is temperate, open windows rather than using mechanical heating or cooling equipment

**Educate employees and be diligent about energy use.** The most effective means to reduce energy bills is to educate staff to treat the community's energy bill as if it was their own. Instruct staff to be diligent about turning off unnecessary lights, minimizing use of heating and cooling when possible, turning off appliances that are not in use, making sure model and vacant units are operated efficiently, and generally looking out for energy waste such as broken photosensors. Management should periodically visit the property after business hours to make sure all measures are being followed.

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